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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000903

SIPDIS

DOE OFFICE FOR GLOBAL THREAT REDUCTION

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2016

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SUBJECT: SENDING SPENT ELK RIVER FUEL TO INDIA

REF: STATE 38375

Classified By: ACTING ECMIN KATHLEEN REDDY for reasons 1.5(b) and (d).

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 2.

2. (U) As instructed reftel, the Ambassador wrote to Prime Ministry Under Secretary Gianni Letta February 28 that the United States could not accept the uranium-thorium spent nuclear fuel stored at the Trisaia Research Center (ITREC) in Matera for transfer to the Savannah River National Laboratory in South Carolina. The Embassy received U/S Letta's response March 9. Embassy's informal translation of that response follows in para 3 below. Action requested: Please provide the text of a reply we can transmit to U/S Letta. End action requested.

3. (C) Begin informal text of that letter. Rome, March 7.

Dear Ambassador,

I thank you for your letter dated February 28 conveying that it would be impossible for the United States to import the uranium-thorium bars stored at the ITREC Center in Matera. I had thought the transfer could have been included within the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, which President Bush recently emphasized as important to stop proliferation. He (the President) has introduced new opportunities to develop nuclear energy to satisfy the world's growing energy demand, without opening up the risk of proliferation. The ITREC bars (in fact) present this risk, since they are formed by uranium-235 at five percent, which can be separated from the remaining 95 percent of thorium.

I have also accepted the fact that the United States excludes (any) possibility of temporarily storing that material in Russia, even if we were to have clearance by ROSATOM (the Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency). Italy, as always, respects agreements (i.e., the U.S.-Euratom agreement mentioned in Ambassador Spogli's letter to U/S Letta, reftel), and I will instruct that negotiations to transfer (the material) temporarily to Russia be interrupted (sic).

The recent agreements on nuclear issues between the United States and India seem to offer another path. Given this new development, I would be grateful if you could tell me, with the urgency this issue requires, if India will be included among (those) countries to which the United States could approve the transfer of the material, like Canada, Japan, and the other (countries) mentioned in the attachment to your letter. Should there be a positive reply (from you), we will start to negotiate with the Indian authorities. It would also be useful to know what Italy must include as a requirement in any such agreement with India.

Best regards, with friendship

Signed: Gianni Letta.

End of informal embassy translation.

SPOGLI